(iii) To provide support to manufacture world class fabrics, the Government has undertaken a phased plan programme for the upgradation of textile testing laboratories. So far the laboratories of 14 PSCs have been upgraded at a cost of round 11.27 crore.

(iv) The Government is formulating a revised Group Insurance Scheme in consultation with the various State Governments and industries for the benefits of the powerloom weavers.

(v) The workshed scheme for the powerloom weavers is under preparation in consultation with the powerloom concentrations states and concerned industry bodies.

(vi) To encourage the decentralised powerloom sector in the direction of direct exports of its products to quota markets such as USA/Canada/EU, Powerloom Exporters' Entitlement quota system was introduced in 1992. The annual export quota level under the PEE for the sector has been increased to 15% from the current year.

(vii) In order to rationalise the power tariffs for powerloom sector, Ministry of Textiles has taken up matter with the major textile manufacturing states in the country.

Proposals from Gujarat for assistance from NRF

1237. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the proposals received from the Gujarat Government during December, 1998;

(b) whether they were for assistance from NRF;

(c) if so, the details of the assistance sanctioned for each proposals; and

(d) the reasons for which no assistance from NRF was sanctioned for any particular proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) to (d) No proposal from Government of Gujarat has been received during December, 1998. However, the following two proposals from Government of Gujarat have been received in 1993 for assistance from National Renewal Fund (NRF):

(i) Proposal of Gujarat State Textiles Corporation seeking assistance from National Renewal Fund (April, 1993); and

(ii) Proposal of Government of Gujarat seeking assistance from NRF for Area Regeneration Scheme for closed textile mills under liquidation (January, 1993).

In the absence of requisite Government approval, no assistance from NRF could be provided to the Government of Gujarat for these schemes. NRF has since been abolished vide a Government Notification on 12.07.2000.

Campaign to Popularise use of Jute Bags

1238. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have studied the impact of use of plastic bags and eco-friendly jute bags;

(b) the steps taken by Government to popularise the campaign of using the jute bags;

(c) whether there is better coordination between the Ministry and various agencies in this regard; and

(d) what are the various agencies and what type of work is done by those agencies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The government has assigned Jute Manufactures Development Council (JMDC) to conduct a study through IIT, Kharagpur to understand the cost aspects of jute packaging vis-a-vis some selected brands of commonly used plastic materials. The study includes inter-alia estimation of social and environment costs and benefits associated with the two materials, considering employment generation, pollution creation and disposability etc. A report has since been submitted by IIT, Kharagpur.

(b) and (c) National Centre for Jute Diversification (JMDC) and Jute Manufactures Development Council (JMDC) are the two government agencies which have been working towards promoting and popularising use of jute bags both in domestic and export